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Sixty-eighth session
Agenda items 14, 19 (a) and 118

Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields

Sustainable development: implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development and of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development

Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit

Report of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals

Addendum

Further explanations of position and reservations on the report

Introduction

At the 108th plenary meeting of the General Assembly, on 10 September 2014, the President of the Assembly invited Member States and observer States to provide their statements to the Secretariat, including explanations of position and reservations on the report of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals (A/68/970 and Corr.1). A compilation of submissions received was issued as document A/68/970/Add.1. The present report is a compilation of submissions received since the issuance of that document.

Japan

We would like to extend our sincere gratitude to the Co-Chairs for having guided us for one and a half years.

When we started this task, our ambition was to have a set of goals and targets that would be truly transformative and inclusive. We believe that our ambition has reached a satisfactory level.

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On the other hand, unfortunately, it is hard to say that we have agreed to a set of goals and targets that are concise, easy to communicate and tweetable.

From my country's viewpoint, we have several serious concerns with the current text in paragraphs 5 and 8 of the chapeau, goal 13 on climate change, goal 16 on peaceful societies and means of implementation and paragraph 14.6 on fisheries subsidies. Notably, on climate change, we would like to stress that nothing in this text will prejudge the outcome of the climate change negotiations.

We had a long journey and we should finish the first phase. We should go into the next phase. As we move towards the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda, we will have the options offered by the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing, the synthesis report of the Secretary-General and the process for financing for development.

Based on these outcomes and processes, we will continue to work in the intergovernmental negotiations for the post-2015 development agenda so that we will be able to establish the agenda, which can be implemented with various stakeholders.

Japan will continue to be engaged in, work hard for and contribute to the process.

Having said this, thanking the Co-Chairs today, I would like to support the intention of the Co-Chairs to move forward.

Last but not least, I would like to extend my sincere thanks to my colleagues of our troika, Iran and Nepal. We did not have coordination of policies, but we do have cooperation and friendship.

United States of America

First, let us express our warm thanks to the Co-Chairs and to our colleagues, who have showed their good faith, stamina and common purpose in reaching this conclusion. We express our appreciation to you all. Together, we have travelled a long way and we have come far.

We believe that our cumulative efforts have helped to build common understanding on critical fundamentals.

Our mandate in the Open Working Group is to prepare a proposal on sustainable development goals for consideration by the General Assembly, not to agree on every issue in this text in every detail. This text in that respect reflects the cumulative stage of our discussions and can in that light be a valuable contribution to the next phase of deliberations over the post-2015 development agenda.

The Open Working Group's role is to decide whether we can agree that this proposal should go forward to the General Assembly for its consideration. In that respect, it is not a question about "adopting" the text or "reopening" the text, but about deciding whether it can go forward — not as a proposal that has to command full agreement in every respect, but as one that can assist us going forward as the cumulative product of our discussions. We believe that it can do so now, and we hope that others can agree similarly.

We thank the Co-Chairs for their leadership and the skill and openness with which they have guided our work from the beginning.

We also want to thank the major groups, the non-governmental organizations, the voices of civil society, experts and scientists who inspired and informed us along the way.

This text reflects areas where we agree and areas where we disagree, as well as many issues that cause serious concern for my delegation. We had hoped for a document that would be able to command broader agreement, but we also recognize that we are only at the end of the first phase of effort. This is a unique document — a working proposal as we start the next phase of our work on the post-2015 development agenda.

We are pleased by many issues that do see prominent treatment in this agenda:

(a) Strong recognition of the need and potential to eradicate extreme poverty in a generation;

(b) Recognition of the power of sustained and inclusive economic growth to drive poverty reduction and broader development;

(c) A clear and ambitious target to cut maternal mortality to 70 per 100,000 by 2030;

(d) The need to end the HIV/AIDS epidemic;

(e) A stand-alone goal on gender equality and empowerment;

(f) We welcome also the recognition of women's sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights. We believe that we could have gone farther and broken new ground. We instead relied on agreed language, but we hope that that at least may enable delegations to show flexibility, and we strongly support the retention of target 5.6 as is;

(g) A critical recognition that peaceful societies with capable and inclusive institutions are essential underpinnings of sustainable development.

We also welcome the strong treatment of climate change in this agenda, with targets related to agriculture, energy, water, efficiency, disaster risk reduction and resilience, and oceans, as well as the call to take urgent action to address climate change and its impacts. We understand that the reference to countries incorporating climate measures into national policies, strategies and planning includes climate measures on mitigation and adaptation. We further understand, as many countries here expressed, that nothing in the Open Working Group text will in any way prejudge the positions of parties in the ongoing United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change negotiations or the final outcome of those negotiations.

In this regard, we seek one small correction, as there was an understanding that the footnote on page 15 would be removed.

We are disappointed that the text was not able to find common ground around many issues on which we believe common ground was possible, and remains possible, but has not yet been reached. We also believe that we could have advanced further in prioritizing cutting-edge issues — such as a target on premature deaths due to poor air quality — and we believe that many of our targets could be stronger, particularly on gender, and we will seek to make them so.

There are several issues that do raise serious concerns for my delegation in this text. I am not expressing these as "reservations" because that is not how we understand the nature of this document. Given the hour, we will not address all but highlight just a few to explain our position:

- First, we have concerns about the way paragraph 5 is now phrased in the chapeau, having changed after the electronic copy was circulated this morning as final. We ask whether that can be corrected.
- The United States understands that nothing in this text purports to affect rights and obligations under international law, including with respect to the rights to take trade measures, and it should not purport to affect the potential constraints under international law or agreements that apply to "policy space".
- We do not believe that a document of this type should define or prejudge decisions, processes, actions and governance under way in autonomous institutions like the global financial institutions or entities like the World Trade Organization.
- We understand that nothing in this outcome document in any way purports to interpret or alter the TRIPS Agreement.
- We also understand that all references to the transfer of or access to technology are to voluntary technology transfer on mutually agreed terms and conditions.
- We do not support the continued inclusion of the concept of a "land-degradation-neutral world", which was rejected in September 2013 by the parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa. We continue to have major concerns that this concept could undermine decades of conservation and development efforts and lead to increased land degradation. True neutrality can only be achieved at the scale of national, subnational and local landscapes.
- Last, in connection with the reference to "foreign occupation" in the chapeau, we reaffirm our view that this text is not the place to address issues of this nature.

Finally, we have heard delegations raise their own concerns. We have just raised some of ours, and you have been patient as there have been several. But this need not, in our view, impede our ability to send this proposal forward as the product of an impressive and invaluable year of hard work — not as a final product but as a critical contribution.

We again reinforce our commitment to working in close cooperation with all fellow delegates, civil society and other partners as we embark on the next phase.

We have indeed come far. The process that has led us to this text has given us an important foundation for that work, and we are confident that together in the days ahead we will be able to craft a compelling, transformative and impactful post-2015 development agenda for all our citizens.

We thank you again, Co-Chairs, for your truly breathtaking commitment to this enterprise, and for this text. We agree that it should be sent forward as is to the General Assembly.

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Withdrawal of reservations by Ghana

In a communication dated 25 September 2015, Ghana informed the Secretary-General that it had withdrawn its reservations regarding targets 3.7 and 5.6 of the Sustainable Development Goals (see A/68/970/Add.1).

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